THE TRAVANCORE ANTI-DOWRY BILL.

SRIMATHI T. NARAYANI AMMA: I beg to move for leave to introduce the Travancore Anti-Dowry Bill.

MR. PUTHUPALLI S. KRISHNA PILLAI: It is supposed that the honourable member should speek a few words in support of the motion.

MR. K. NARAYANAPERUMAL NARAR: Sir, I oppose the motion for leave being granted to introduce the Travancore Anti-Dowry Bill. The bill is one which if passed will considerably affect several communities that follow the Hindu Mithakshara law, particularly the Hindu Nadar community.

MR. KAINIKKARA M. PADMANABHA PILLAI: Because the honourable member has opposed the motion for leave to introduce the Bill, he is not entitled to speak now. It is for the member in charge of the Bill to explain the object of the Bill.

PRESIDENT: Yes at the time when she was introducing the bill she could have explained. Now, Srimati Narayani Amma will explain the object of the Bill.

SRIMATHI T. NARAYANI AMMA: Sir I shall briefly explain the main features of the Bill. Its, object, Sir, is, as stated in the preamble of the Bill, to restrain the custom of taking or offering dowry in marriages. Whatever may be the origin of the dowry, there is no doubt whatever that it is now considered by the vast majority of persons affected as a great social evil which calls for immediate removal. In British India there is a growing volume of public opinion in favour of its removal, and speakers and writers have vividly described the evil effects of the custom. The Sind Assembly has passed an Anti-Dowry Bill and in the Bombay and Behar Assemblies, Dowry Restraint Bills have heen introduced. The speeches delivered in the Sind and Behar Assemblies by those in favour of this measure show the strength of popular feeling in regard to the custom of Dowry. In the course of the discussion during the introduction of the Dowry Restraint Bill in the Behar Assembly it was stated on behalf of the Government that the Dowry system was recognised on all hands to be an evil and that the Government would not stand in the way of the Assembly making an effort to put down the custom. And speakers observed that the contract of marriage should not be tainted with petty considerations of money. In Turkey, the giving of Dowries has recently been declared illegal. The evils of the Dowry system in Hindu marriages is felt so acutely that it has been made the theme of a Telugu film. When the first screening of this film took place in Madras, Mrs. Muthulekshmi Reddi the well known social worker who presided on the occasion, appeal to the Government of Madras to introduce Anti-Dowry Legislation.

Conditions in Travancore with regard to the dowry system, may be somewhat different from those which obtain elsewhere. But here also they are bad enough to merit notice. There are several communities which are affected by it. The learned author of the Report of the last Travancore Census says that the Dowry marriage is the universal

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custom among Brahmins and that it is also prevalent among Christians and is becoming prevalent among Nairs, Ezhavas and Nanjinad Vellalas. It is also stated that the "practice of parents procuring husbands for their daughters either by payment in cash or by meeting the expenses of their higher education in Indian or foreign Universities, is also coming into vogue among Nairs and other Marumakkathayam communities".

There is a growing feeling, Sir, among the public that the custom, which vitiates the sacredness of marriages and is very often the cause of unhappy alliance, breaches of agreement and family quarrels, should be put to a stop to.

It is with this object, Sir, that I seek to introduce the Anti-dowry Bill. It is a modest measure and does not in any way prevent the taking or offering of small presents voluntarily and spontaneously as a token of natural love and affection.

My only object is to see that the sacredness of marriages is not tainted with ideas of purchase and sales, and that the economic condition of poor families is not affected by a pernicious custom. I fully trust that the principle underlying the Bill will be endorsed by all sections of this House.

MR. K. NARAYANAPERUMAL NADAR: Sir, the Hindu Nadar community, though they were under enumerated by the census enumerators are numerically larger than, any other Hindu community except the Nairs and the Ezhavas. They are followers of the Mithakshara law. According to the Mithakshara law a woman is not entitled to her father's property. When once the marriage takes place she becomes a member of her husband's family. But she is entitled to get the dowry. But when this Bill is passed into law she does not become entitled to the dowry. The practice at present prevailing among the Hindu Nadar community is that the fathers give dowries to their daughters. The mover of the bill is against it.

PRESIDENT: Say, for offering not less than a lakh of rupees to his daughter 5 days before or 10 days after the marriage—what happens thaen I don't find anything in the bill to prevent it.

MR. K. NARAYANAPERUMAL NADAR: Now, sub-section (6) of Section 2 says as follows:—

> "'Dowry' means and includes stipulations made in connection with marriages fixing the quantity or quality of things to be paid for in cash or kind on ceremonial or other occasions before or after the marriage and the giving and receiving of presents in cash or kind."

PRESIDENT: Order. Order. Supposing it is made not on the occasion of the marriage but two months before or six months after the marriage.

MR. K. NARAYANAPERUMAL NADAR: But this sub-clause does not say anything enabling ladies to receive dowries. And I am for it Section 28 of the Christian Succession Act makes provision for the grant of dowry. I endorse this provision. But if this provision in the

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[Mr. K. Narayana Perumal Nadar.]

Bill introduced just now, is passed into law the Hindu Nadar woman will not get anything by way of dowry. But I am for the principle that the son and daughter should get equal shares. But if this bill is passed into law it would be a tragedy of high intention self defeated.

MR. KAINIKKARA M. PADMANABHA PILLAI: May I know whether the Hindu Nadars marry from other communities? Or do marriages take place between members of the same community?

MR. K. NARAYANAPERUMAL NADAR: We do not marry from other communities.

PRESIDENT: Under Standing Order 31 I will now put the question to vote.

The motion for leave to introduce the Bill was put to vote and carried.

Leave was granted.

THE TRAVANCORE CUTCHY MEMON BILL.

MR. P. S. MUHAMMED: I beg to introduce 'the Travancore Cutchy Memon Bill.'

PRESIDENT: Any opposition:

As there was no opposition, the question that the honourable member has the leave of the House to introduce the Bill was put and carried.

Leave was granted.

RESOLUTIONS.

EXCLUSION OF SMALL WOODLANDS FROM THE RESERVE

[This Assembly recommends to the Government that small wood lands which do not yield much income be exempted from the Reserves and assigned to the public.]

MR. T. T. KESAVAN SASTRI: സാർ, ഈ പ്രമേയം സഭാസമക്ഷം ഞാൻ അവതരിപ്പിച്ചുകൊള്ളുന്നു.

കുടിപാർക്കുന്നതിനൊക്കുഷിചെയ്തുപജീവനം കഴിക്കുന്നതിനോസ്വന്തമായി ഭൂമിയില്ലാതെ സങ്കടപ്പെടുന്ന അനവധി ജനങ്ങൾക്കുവേണ്ടി ഈ പ്രമേയം ഇങ്ങനെ അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്നതാകുന്നു. എഴുപത്തിയഞ്ചു ശതമാനം ജനങ്ങളും സ്വന്തം ഭൂമിയില്ലാത്തവരാണ്. ഭൂസ്വത്തുടമസ്ഥന്മാരെ ആശ്രയിച്ചു അവരുടെ സ്ഥലങ്ങളിൽ അടകുടിക്കാരായി കഴിയാൻ മുമ്പു സൗകര്യമുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. എന്നാൽ അളോഹരി ഭാഗത്താലും ജനസംഖ്യയുടെ വർദ്ധനവിനാലും ഭൂമിയുടമസ്ഥന്മാർക്കു തന്നെ അവരവരുടെ സ്ഥലങ്ങൾ മതിയാകാതെ വന്നിരിക്കുന്നതിനാൽ ഇന്നു പാവങ്ങൾ ഈ വിഷ

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